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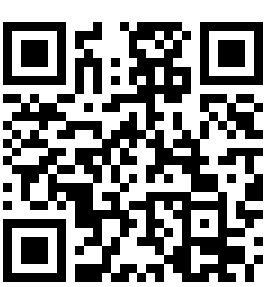

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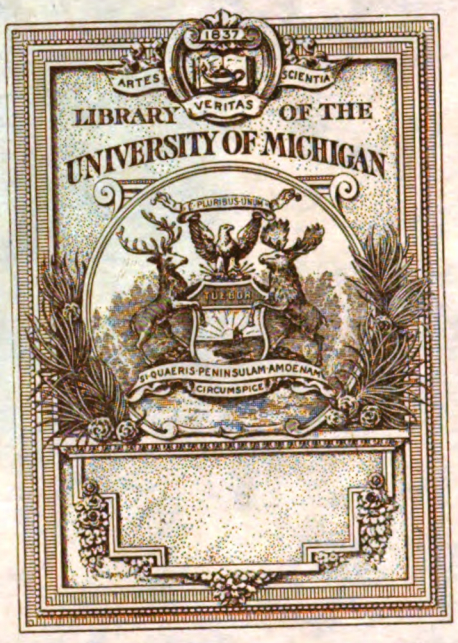

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REPORT

ON THE

TYPHUS EPIDEMIC AT GARDELEGEN

BY THE

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

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ON THE

TREATMENT BY THE ENEMY OF BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1915.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
October 1916.

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Report on the Typhus Epidemic at Gardelegen by the Government Committee on the Treatment by the Enemy of British Prisoners of War during the Spring and Summer of 1915.

MUCH public interest has from time to time been manifested in the circumstances attending the typhus epidemic that devastated the internment camp at Gardelegen during the first six months of last year. This committee have now obtained from Major P. C. T. Davy, R.A.M.C., Captain Arthur J. Brown, R.A.M.C., and Captain Scott-Williams, R.A.M.C., who were there, detailed accounts of their experiences, and they believe that a report of the outbreak, based upon these officers' statements, with other information in the possession of the Committee, may still be useful and instructive, although this painful incident in German internment administration is happily now closed.

The Committee are the more confirmed in this belief because the facts which they will have to detail appear to them, with their painful experience of German methods, to be typical of much that may under similar conditions be expected to recur, unless those in authority are constrained by the pressure of neutral condemnation, if for no more worthy reason, to make it certain that they shall not. Moreover, a report upon this outbreak enables the Committee to direct attention to acts of heroism and devotion on the part both of our own men and of our Allies which deserve to be placed on record and remembered.

The internment camp at Gardelegen appears to have been constructed for the purposes of the present war. It was first opened for the reception of prisoners in the month of November 1914. Situated about 1½ miles from the station of the same name on the main railway line from Berlin to Hanover, the camp is built at the edge of a large pine forest, on land facing the north-west, and sloping down to the town, 2 kilometres below. It is surrounded by a barbed-wire fence about 9 or 10 feet in height; it is of an area of about 350 by 550 yards, and it is divided into two battalions by a lane, dominated at either end by a guard room. Each battalion is in turn subdivided into four companies, each company being contained in a fence, similar to that surrounding the whole camp, and forming a compound of about 252 yards by 52 yards. In every compound there are eight wooden huts, three large huts on either side and two smaller huts, one at each end. The six larger huts or barracks are there for the accommodation of the prisoners. They are each about 150 feet long, 33 feet broad, and 9 feet high. Every barrack is divided by a transverse wooden partition, so as to form two large rooms of equal size. Of the buildings at either end of the compound, one is the latrine and urinal for the company, the other is a hut divided into three compartments, the first of which is used as the company office, the second by the orderly N.C.O. of the day, and the third as the company quartermaster's stores. There was no intercommunication between either the battalions or the companies. The prisoners in any company never left their area except on fatigue duties, and held no intercourse with those of another company. This restriction, burdensome as in fact it was, had at least one advantage, it enabled the authorities to localise infection.

Before the outbreak there was only one bath-house for the whole camp. This was situated near the kitchen of No. 1 Battalion. It was a small building containing twenty-four to thirty shower jets. In a corner of the camp, about 150 yards away from the No. 1 Company of the No. 1 Battalion, are two wooden erections, together known as the lazaret. Each contains two wards with 200 beds in all.

Every battalion has its own kitchen, situated about fifty yards from the company compound.

Apart from the fact that the soil is sandy, "becoming," in Major Davy's words, "in winter a sea of most appalling mud, and in summer a perfect horror of dust," the site for the camp was chosen discreetly enough; nor to the barracks themselves can any proper exception be taken.

Dr. Ohnesorg indicated in his report that a well, supplementing presumably the town supply, and sunk at a safe distance from the stockade, enables an unstinted supply of water to be given, and he points out that the slope on which the camp is placed provides natural drainage for the rain water. The International Committee of the Red

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Cross describes the barracks as being roofed with tarred felt, the walls white, and the rooms light.

The camp, however, was intended to hold 14,000 prisoners, and the area covered by it is quite inadequate for the internment of so large a body of men. This one might have supposed would have been recognised by the camp authorities, but it was not.

Three hundred was the official complement of each barrack, 1,800 of each company; but some time before the outbreak, when only a few companies were up to the strength even of 1,200, the commandant declined to spread the men over all the huts of the compounds so as to give each of the prisoners more room. They were crowded instead, as many as 300 to 320 of them into a barrack, with approximately only 6 cubic metres of space for each man. The administrative view apparently was that such a modicum of space was an officially defined maximum, sufficient for a prisoner, to which nothing was to be added, even if room were available for the purpose. The narrow strip in each compound between the barracks—"in winter a sea of mud and snow"—was the sole exercise ground for all.

The camp, when the outbreak itself broke out, contained about 11,000 prisoners, viz., 4,000 Russians, 6,000 French, 700 Belgians, and about 230 British. It had been officially ordered that the four nationalities should be well mixed in proportionate numbers in each barrack room. Accordingly, out of a total of 230 British prisoners in the camp, eighty was the greatest number in any one company. It is unnecessary at this time of day to comment upon the notorious object of this regulation. It was a regulation characteristic of the worst kinds of German camps.

Major Davy says, with regard to the overcrowding of the prisoners:—

"The overcrowding was such as I have never before seen or imagined anywhere. The hut contained in the breadth four rows of straw or shaving palliasses so arranged that laterally they were touching and terminally only left the narrowest passage-way between. Here men of all nationalities were crowded together. In these huts, devoid of tables and stools, the men lived, slept, and fed. They sat on their bags of shavings to eat their meals; they walked over each other in passing in and out; they lay there sick, and later on, in many cases, died there cheek by jowl with their fellow-prisoners. The atmosphere by day, and still more by night, was indescribably fœtid, and this was their sole alternative to going outside in their meagre garments for fresh air."

Captain Scott-Williams shows how this specially affected the British prisoners:—

"It was like one large palliasse all round the room. If one man was lying on his back, his neighbour must be on his side. The stench in the room at night was horrid, as windows were nearly always shut as soon as the English dropped to sleep."

And the prisoners were not only overcrowded, they were also insufficiently fed. Parcels had not begun to reach them from home, and they had to subsist as best they might on the food provided by the camp administration. This was bad in quality and inadequate in quantity.

"I have no hesitation," says Major Davy, "in saying that the diet the prisoners received was not sufficient to keep an adult in a normal state of nutrition. I wish to be clearly understood: I mean that every man who subsisted on what was issued to him was gradually getting emaciated and anæmic, and was constantly a prey to the pangs of hunger."

"The rations," says Captain Brown, "were altogether inadequate and insufficient, and as a result the men were semi-starved."

From the beginning of April 1915 the British, and still more the French, existed to an ever-increasing extent on what they received from home. The Russians, however, were not so fortunate. Up to the end of June only between twelve and twenty parcels a week arrived for them, and, as at the end of May the official daily allowance of bread was reduced by ½ to 250 grammes per man, equivalent to a thickish slice of an ordinary loaf—the extremity of the hunger of these men became positively acute.

"It was no unusual sight," says Captain Brown, "to see a crowd of Russians on their hands and knees in the pit in which potato peelings were thrown, struggling to find a stray potato or a piece of rind with a little more potato than usual. This occurred day after day."

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The men, too, were inadequately clothed. Of the British a large number (probably 100) were wearing mixed fragments of Belgian, French, or Russian uniforms. Major Davy thinks that, on a moderate estimate, only about 30 had a pair of serviceable boots. About 100 had no boots at all, and were left to walk about with their feet tied up in straw and rags or in blanket slippers, which they had made for themselves. Some had wooden-soled heelless clogs issued to them by the German authorities, quite unsuitable things for shuffling about in through the snow. None had more than the clothes they stood in, and they suffered acutely from the cold. On Major Davy enquiring into the clothing question, he found that, although a very few of the men admitted having sold their overcoats to buy food or tobacco, the vast majority had had their overcoats taken from them when they were made prisoners and had never had them returned. Yet all this time there was a quantity of khaki service kit in the camp store, which the commandant first of all neglected and finally refused to distribute.

The sufferings of the prisoners, due to insufficient food and clothing, were further aggravated by the extreme cold at Gardelegen during the winter of 1914–15, and by the fact that, although there were two fire-places in each barrack, only one box of bricks a day for the two fires was provided, a totally inadequate supply.

Moreover, the sanitary condition of the camp was deplorable. There was, as has been stated, for each company a latrine and a urinal under one roof, and the state of these places, owing to the neglect of the camp authorities, is described both by Major Davy and Captain Brown in terms which cannot properly be repeated in this report. And the task of emptying the latrines into tubular tank carts was as a regular practice specially allotted to the British prisoners until sickness had so much reduced their number that a fatigue party of sufficient strength in any one company could not be obtained. In addition, a hand system of emptying by buckets was in force, and the condition of the men, after being employed on this duty, with no clothes to change into was terrible in the extreme.

For, notwithstanding the sufficiency of water of which Dr. Ohnesorg speaks, there were throughout the camp, prior to the outbreak, practically no facilities for personal cleanliness. In each company there was one stand-pipe leading off to a trough. At this some 1,200 men had to congregate each day, to wash their eating utensils, their clothes and themselves—and all this without soap. Moreover, these pipes were often frozen; and when, as happened later, the water supply was cut off every day from 10 A.M. to 3 or 4 P.M., cleanliness was out of the question.

The only other washing provision for the entire prison population of 11,000 was the one small building already referred to, which contained twenty-four to thirty shower-jets. Companies were detailed to send men to this wash-house in turn, and at first—but only at first—the men were supplied with a very small quantity of soft soap. Very frequently, however, the bath-house was not working, and Major Davy found many men who had been three months in the camp without having been once able to get a bath.

The result was that, by the month of February 1915, every man in the camp of every nationality was infected with the body louse; lice swarmed in every garment the men wore, and in every blanket they slept in.

During this period also the prisoners were treated by their guards with the utmost harshness. Major Davy had sufficiently long experience of these guards before they abandoned the camp to satisfy him that a reign of terror and brutality existed.

"At the daily roll-call parades," he says, "men were driven out of their barrack-rooms with kicks and blows. The German under-officers were the chief offenders. The German officers, of whom one was in command in each company, were mostly elderly men, who seemed quite in the hands of their under-officers. I never once saw one check an under-officer for the most flagrant bullying."

It was therefore a band of overcrowded, half-starved, ill-clad, shivering, and terrorized men that confronted Major Davy and Captain Brown on their arrival at the camp on the 11th February, 1915.

"My first impression," Major Davy writes, "of the utter misery and desolation of it all was intensified on closer acquaintance. In passing through the camp on the day we arrived I had been struck by the complete silence everywhere. A few prisoners were standing or pacing to and fro, singly and in groups, in complete dejection and apathy. There was no talking or laughter, nobody was playing games. The only sounds heard were brutally shouted orders of the sentries, who were closely posted in every direction. Now, in passing from one company to another, and talking to the prisoners, one could not but be struck by the gaunt, hunted look they all bore. So

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much wretchedness and sickness concentrated in such a small area, such a sense of the absence of any sort of human feeling, made one utterly shocked and miserable. It was still sadder to see that what was all so horrible to me in its novelty, had for them become so much part of their life that they accepted it almost without comment."

Again :—

"That all the English had suffered severely was very obvious. They, like the prisoners of other nationalities, bore the signs of semi-starvation and constant harrying. They were all very thin and anæmic, apathetic and listless."

No. 7 Company was the first to be visited by Captain Brown. This is his description of the experience :—

"Snow had fallen, and was still falling heavily, and the cold was intense. On entering the barrack room the shock I received was too awful for words. The atmosphere was almost too foul. All windows were shut as the only means of warmth. There were about 150 of the most miserable human objects I ever beheld—British, French, and Belgians occupied this room, the number of British here being about twenty-six. The men were emaciated, ill-clad, and dirty beyond description, and in most cases were engaged in killing as many lice as possible in their clothes—'To keep the numbers down as much as possible' as one man put it. The senior non-commissioned officer in the room was a company sergeant-major of the Royal Scots. Being so appalled with the dirty state of all the men, himself included, I remonstrated with him and asked him why they were so positively filthy, and if they had all lost their interest in life, for so it seemed. His reply was that they had no opportunity of a bath since their arrival. 'How long have you been here?' I asked, and the reply came, 'Ten weeks.'"

Thus were sown the seeds of the epidemic which soon supervened.

It would appear that by the beginning of February the camp authorities had become fearful that something of the kind was impending, for they proceeded to bring from their places of internment elsewhere a body of British, French, and Russian medical officers detailed for duty at the camp. Up to that time the British prisoners who fell sick had been under the care in their barracks of a French medical officer, who had arrived at the camp along with them. But on the 11th February Major Davy and Captain Brown, then interned at Magdeburg, were taken from that camp and placed in a train for an undisclosed destination. This turned out to be Gardelegen, from which station they were marched, under escort, to the camp, carrying their own kit. On arrival they were placed in the annex of the guard hut of No. 4 Company, a room 30 feet by 18 feet, which was destined to be the quarters throughout the epidemic of seven of them. Later in the evening they were joined by four French medical officers who had, like themselves, arrived that day. One Russian medical officer also reached the camp on the same day. Three others came at a later date.

Next morning the doctors who had arrived were directed to assemble at the camp hospital to receive orders. They there met Stabsarzt, Dr. Wenzil, and the camp commandant, Colonel Brunner. The commandant deemed the occasion appropriate for a speech, in which he informed these medical officers that if they obeyed orders and did their work without complaining they would be well treated and everything possible would be done for their comfort, but, if not, they would be punished. Point was given to this last observation by the fact that at this time these doctors in their movements about the camp were being conducted from place to place by an armed escort. Having made this deliverance the commandant left, deputing Dr. Wenzil to assign to the officers their respective duties in the camp.

Dr. Wenzil had been in charge of the hospital and in medical charge of the camp. Under him was a staff of German nursing orderlies, and assisting him was a young man named Boas, a third or fourth year medical student. The hospital, as has been stated, had 200 beds; it ought not, so restricted was the space, to have contained more than ninety. Dr. Wenzil, feeling, apparently, that some apology was due, explained that it was merely a detention hospital, intended and adapted for light cases only, and that any severe cases were transferred to the town hospital. This accounted, he said, for the very meagre supply of drugs and dressings on which the British doctors had commented. That supply comprised a very small amount of the common drugs, such as 4 oz. of Epsom salts and three to four dozen tablets each of quinine, asperin, and

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calomel. There were also a dozen or so of bandages, an armful of gauze and lint dressings, and a very small case of surgeon's instruments. The equipment was, in fact, far less than would usually be found in a ten-bedded cottage hospital or a workshop dispensary. The whole was contained in a moderate-sized cupboard.

As soon became very obvious, the camp authorities were not mistaken in their fears of an impending epidemic. Four days after the arrival of the British officers the sick rate mounted rapidly. Cases were coming into the hospital at the rate of forty or fifty a day, so that it soon filled and overflowed. Application was then made to the commandant to have No. 3 Company, which was nearest to the hospital, emptied of all its prisoners and turned into an annex of the hospital. This was done, and one barrack room after another was steadily filled. The cases, up to this time, were mostly mild and atypical, and their nature, although suspected by the British medical officers, was not clearly established. Very soon, however, a commission of German doctors arrived —amongst them a professor from Magdeburg. After a visit of less than an hour the commission left the camp. Within half-an-hour of their departure there was a stir amongst the German guards. They were packing up and preparing apparently for a hasty retreat. In two hours there was not a German inside the camp. Herr Boas, whom Major Davy was to meet and go over some cases with, was absent. He was never seen again. Every German hospital orderly had gone. The sick were left quite unattended. In the hospital there remained only a few British, French, and Russian prisoners employed on fatigue duty. The prison kitchens were empty, the German women formerly employed there having departed. Presently the sentries were seen drawn up in a cordon twenty paces outside the outermost barbed-wire fence, some of them engaged in re-erecting the kennels, and putting up food boilers for the dogs that had hitherto been employed inside the camp to assist them.

Before leaving, the sentries had unlocked every gate of every company, and the entire prison population roamed freely through the camp from one company to another, rejoicing in the novelty of it. Whether so intended or not, the lamentable effect of this was that, whereas the cases had hitherto mainly come from No. 8 Company, now every company was inextricably mixed and the epidemic became general.

Amongst the prisoners the wildest rumours prevailed—"A revolution had broken out in Berlin; the Germans had been called away to help to quell it." That the camp was isolated and its imprisoned inmates left to their own devices never dawned upon them as it did upon the medical men.

Later in the afternoon these doctors, French, Russian, and English, were summoned to the outer barbed wire to meet the commandant. He told those who received the summons and attended that the camp was in quarantine; that a "sanitary cordon" had been drawn round it; that nothing of any kind, sort, or description was to pass out, and that the sentries posted round had orders to shoot anyone who attempted to leave; that he held the doctors responsible for the treatment of the sick, the discipline and good order of the camp and its general internal arrangement; that he or an officer would come to the same spot daily, and would receive what requests or representations they had to make; that a bell would be hung up outside, and that upon its being rung someone was to come to the fence to receive orders.

The personality of Colonel Brunner impressed favourably the International Committee of the Red Cross, and also, it would seem, Dr. Ohnesorg.

It is unfortunate that these gentlemen did not see that commandant in isolated contact with his prisoners. If they had it cannot be doubted that the world would not for so long have been ignorant of his unfitness for the position which he held. Such a speech at such a moment, not to mention other incidents recorded in the sequel, proclaim it, and go far to confirm the statement made to the committee—that he was of extremely violent temper, and always brutal towards the prisoners; that he treated them, whatever their nationality, not as prisoners of war, but as men who had earned and were to receive rigorous punishment.

The medical officers had now to take stock of the situation and devise such measures as were possible to meet it. It was sufficiently appalling. The hospital was full to repletion. The sick were pouring into No. 3 Company, the hospital annex. The barracks there were of course quite devoid of all furniture or equipment, and were in no sense wards. The sick had to be dumped down anywhere, for there was not at first a sufficient number of attendants to cope with the work. There were no beds for them; they had to lie on their shaving-filled bags. There were no bed-pans nor urine bottles, and the state of the patients and the floors was indescribable. There were no feeding-mugs or even small cups or bowls—nothing but the large bowl which formed part of each man's equipment. No milk, or eggs, or other invalid fare was forthcoming. It was ordained

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that the sick were to continue on exactly the same rations as they had been receiving—the same soup, the same black bread, the same weekly raw herring for each —a diet "tragically grotesque," in Major Davy's words, "for a man in the middle of an acute illness."

The doctors, however, did not flinch. They searched carefully through all the huts in the camp for overlooked or undetected cases. The prisoners had become so confused and demoralised that a man's absence or illness was apt to pass unnoticed by his companions. More than once our medical men were sent for hastily to a hut to see prisoners who were said suddenly to have gone mad. All that had happened was that for some days they had been stricken with the disease, had said nothing about it, and the stage of delirium had meanwhile been reached.

In a day or two, however, a properly working system of orderlies was organised to visit every room frequently, and the non-commissioned officers in each room were required to notify any evidence of sickness in a man of their nationality.

On Company No. 3 becoming full, the half of No. 2 Company next door was emptied and divided down its whole length and united to Company No. 3. This gave room for 600 more patients. Then Major Davy and Captain Brown started sorting out the cases. They had a room for scarlet fever, of which they had a small epidemic going on at the same time, a room for suspicious cases, a room for miscellaneous diseases, and some rooms cut off and isolated for convalescents undergoing a period of quarantine.

They arranged for a constant flow of the worst cases into the hospital proper, which was under Major Davy's charge, and they established a roster of attendants for night and day duty. The number of British in the camp was relatively small, so that the sick among them formed only a small part of the British officers' care. They shared with the French doctors the care of the French and Belgian cases. The Russian patients were attended by the four Russian officers, as great difficulty was experienced by the other doctors in dealing with them, owing to their ignorance of the Russian language.

Dr. Wenzil, as has already been said, was the officer who had been in medical charge of the camp. It is, unhappily, not possible to acquit him of responsibility for the neglect of the most elementary sanitary precautions, for the absolutely unsuitable and insufficient diet provided for the patients while he remained in charge, for omission to supply in anything like sufficient quantity the barest medical and surgical necessities. But more need not be said, for soon after he fell a victim to his own neglect.

Although he had, when in hospital, always worn washable overalls, while the other medical officers had none, he sickened shortly after the quarantine had been declared, and a few days later, so our doctors were told, he died of typhus in the town.

It is not quite certain whether he ever appeared at all at the daily meetings with the commandant. If he did it was only on one or two occasions.

Three or four days after the isolation of the camp a new medical officer appeared with the commandant. He never once, however, came inside the camp. Dr. Saint-Hilaire was the senior in rank and age of the French doctors, and because he spoke a little German, and seemed to arouse less hostility when he approached the commandant than did the English, he was selected to be the spokesman at these interviews. For many days he and Major Davy endeavoured to obtain the things most essential. They asked for milk and eggs to be supplied for the use of the sick and for a more plentiful supply of drugs. They asked that the doctors and orderlies might be supplied with gowns and rubber gloves in order to lessen the danger of infection. The commandant, however, did not appear at all impressed, and nothing resulted.

The new medical officer was equally obdurate. The only time he ever addressed Major Davy was to shout at him for not saluting him properly, after which he turned away without even waiting to hear what Major Davy had to say.

The second officer remained only a few days in office. He was succeeded by a third, who came fairly often to the camp, but, like his predecessor, never once entered it. He, however, was more responsive. A few ordinary iron pails were supplied for use as commodes, and the French prisoners made some wooden tops for them. Then several hundred iron bedsteads arrived—perhaps 400 or 500—so the doctors were able to place the worst cases in bed on their palliasses. It was, however, two weeks before any gowns or rubber gloves were issued, and then only for a few of the doctors. To that neglect was doubtless attributable the infection caught by so large a number of the medical men and orderlies, and the deaths of so many of them.

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The milk question was solved in this way: milk was obtained from the town by a friendly under-officer, who received a small commission for his trouble, and it was paid for by the medical officers themselves. No milk at all was supplied by the German authorities. It was owing to the exertions also of the British officers that in time the bare necessities were forthcoming. So soon as he arrived at the camp Major Davy wrote home mentioning the things of which the men were most in need. This was quoted in a letter to the "Daily Telegraph," with the result that by the end of April a quantity of parcels addressed to him containing soap, food, clothing and books began to arrive; Captain Brown also wrote home, and a hundredweight of soap and other useful things in due course reached him.

Towards the end of March a German medical officer in civilian dress arrived at the camp. He was a Dr. Kranski, an elderly man who had spent twenty-three years in Africa, eighteen of them in practice at Alexandria. He spoke English fluently, and in striking contrast to his German predecessors and to other German medical men, who, it is believed, had refused to take the position, he devoted himself assiduously to his task, coming to the camp early and generally working late. Dr. Kranski's devotion is all the more notable and praiseworthy because he himself had been deported from Egypt at the beginning of the war, and it is quite certain that none of the deficiencies after his arrival—and they were very many—were in any way attributable to him.

He took over the charge of the camp, but he did not interfere with the medical arrangements which had been made. He devoted himself to improving the sanitation, and left the treatment of the sick entirely in the hands of the other officers. He seemed, indeed—for very shame, as Major Davy thinks—to shun the hospital, and scarcely ever entered it. To him, however, it was probably due that by the time the epidemic had practically worked itself out—unfortunately not before—a large bath-house, with a dry heat disinfector attached, was ready for use. To him also it is due that about the end of April cauldrons and boilers for providing hot water at the hospital were provided.

But Dr. Kranski was in the hands of the commandant. He could not do all that it is certain he would have wished to do. Before his arrival the drugs received had not been appreciably more than those supplied before the epidemic, and they were always sent in exasperatingly small quantities—to-day a few ounces of Epsom salts, to-morrow a handful of asperin tablets, a few ounces of tincture of iodine, a little lint and gauze, and the like. Castor-oil was never forthcoming.

It followed that by the time he came an enormous number of extremely bad sores, several cases of gangrene, many large ulcers; indeed, every form of extensive suppuration which requires frequent dressing had supervened. Dressings, in short, were the most urgent need, for many cases had to go as long as eight days without a change. Major Davy and Captain Brown never ceased to ask Dr. Kranski for a further supply, but he could not get either drugs or dressings. The refusal of a more plentiful supply of both was based on the pretext that there was not a sufficiency of these things to be obtained in Germany, Dr. Kranski, so far as the dressings were concerned, adding that it was the English who were to blame, as they were making cotton so scarce in the country.

It seems to the Committee impossible to find any justification or palliation for the conduct of the German administration in this matter.

The epidemic lasted for about four months. Two recrudescences of the disease at the end of April and the beginning of May were practically confined to the French and Belgian prisoners. Before it came finally to an end over 2,000 cases were dealt with out of about 11,000 prisoners of war. The exact figures are in the hands of the German authorities, but the mortality was approximately 15 per cent. of those who were attacked. The type of the disease was milder than that which attacked other German camps. In this respect alone Gardelegen was fortunate.

By the end of June the typhus had burnt itself out. There was no more than a sporadic case occurring now and then, No. 3 was nearly empty. There were some six British convalescents still in the hospital, and the camp was looking forward with misgiving to the return of the Germans.

It is this fact which seems to the Committee to be one of the most painful incidents in a dismal record. That which must strike the ordinary man as the greatest shortcoming attributable to responsible military or medical authorities—namely, the deliberate abandonment to their fate when danger threatened of helpless men committed to their charge—was to the prisoners themselves a positive relief.

"When the camp was put in quarantine," says Captain Brown, "I do not think

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there was a single prisoner who was not delighted. We were all thankful that the German officers, non-commissioned officers, and men were outside the barbed wire. All the prisoners of war were wearied with the constant bullying. . . . . The British soldiers had been undoubtedly bullied more than our Allies, and the Russians were treated a great deal worse than the Belgians or French."

So it was not the abandonment of their post by the Germans that disheartened and enraged our men. It was something else.

"If the commandant at any time," says Major Davy, "had expressed any regret, or if he had even shown any sympathy or interest in the matter, the situation would have been more tolerable. But throughout he took up an attitude of detachment or hostility which was maddening."

A single example will suffice. The doctors encouraged those among the prisoners who were well to take part in outdoor games. Footballs made out of rags began to appear. Then one or two footballs arrived from England and matches were arranged, Belgian *v.* British, and so on. The commandant gave orders that football was forbidden under pain of severe punishment. In the same way boxing bouts and wrestling matches were got up, but after a fortnight Major Davy was sent for by Coloner Brunner, was severely reprimanded for allowing these things, and commanded to stop them instantly.

One order of the commandant was disobeyed. In rearranging the camp after the departure of the guard Major Davy sorted out the British, and when their numbers admitted of it put them in rooms by themselves with their own non-commissioned officers in charge. Colonel Brunner having heard of this gave orders to the French adjutants of companies that the British were to be spread out as before. The order was ignored.

Yet these German authorities were sensitive to outside opinion. A notable illustration may be given. Dr. Ohnesorg, of the American Embassy at Berlin, visited the camp in April, but owing to its plague stricken condition he was unable to enter it. Major Davy was by this time struck down with typhus and did not see him, but Captain Brown spoke to him in the presence of the commandant and an unter-offizier. In the course of a conversation about the food Dr. Ohnesorg astonished Captain Brown by saying that he had seen several carcases of mutton outside the kitchen of No. 2 Battalion. Captain Brown, who had never before seen meat enter the camp, went, after Dr. Ohnesorg's departure, to enquire, only to find that the meat had never come inside the camp. It had been taken back to the town after its exhibition purpose had been fulfilled, and Dr. Ohnesorg, whose visit was expected, had been duly and favourably impressed.

The epidemic was the occasion for striking examples of self-sacrificing devotion. There were ten French Roman Catholic priests in the camp as prisoners. They lived together in the guard hut of No. 2 Company. All of them volunteered to work among the sick, and they were given charge of rooms in the hospital annexes and of wards in the hospital. They were most adaptable, teachable men, and their absolute fearlessness and unselfish devotion to duty cannot be too highly extolled. Eight out of the ten contracted the disease and five of them died.

And the soldiers who volunteered their services as nursing orderlies were equally heroic. It did not need the priests' example to inspire these men. British, French, and Russian alike, never was there lack of attendants for the sick when once the need was recognised. The doctors selected chiefly unmarried men as attendants, and later those who had recovered from the fever. There were no gowns or overalls for them and the work they voluntarily undertook carried with it the practical certainty of being attacked by the disease. Indeed, every one of those detailed to handle and wash the patients' clothes and blankets contracted it. Twenty-two of these attendants were British; all, with two exceptions, were untrained. Twenty of them caught the disease; two of them died. The committee hope later to be able to supply a full list of these men. They are fortunately able to name thirteen of them now.

11163. Lance-corporal Lloyd Simpson, 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (now R.A.M.C.).
11151. Private William Bristow, 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (now R.A.M.C.).
9111. Private F. Goulder, 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers.
14523. Corporal W. Boudman, 4th Royal Fusiliers.
12927. Lance-corporal W. Batt, 4th Royal Fusiliers.
11121. Private William Clark, 4th Royal Fusiliers.

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1882. Private Dolton, 6th Special Reserve Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (attached 4th Battalion).
7236. Private W. Manser, 1st Scots Guards.
10266. Private S. Kellett, 2nd West Riding Regiment.
9052. Corporal George Neill, 2nd West Riding Regiment.
9219. Corporal F. Brashaw, 1st Battalion Cheshire Regiment.
10561. Private James Gooderham, 2nd West Riding Regiment.
[?] Private John Roberts, 3rd Special Reserve Battalion, West Riding Regiment.

Among the medical staff the fever made great havoc. In the first week of March Dr. Brésard, a French medical officer, sickened of typhus. Then, in rapid succession, Drs. Laval (French), Wassilief, Kreistler, and Schafira (Russians). Major Davy caught the infection on the 25th March, and had to go to bed two days later. By the second week in April five of the seven medical officers who lived in the British officers' hut were down at the same time. The medical officers occupying the other deserted guard huts fared no better. Of the sixteen doctors in the camp twelve contracted the disease and two died.

Some time after the epidemic had been in progress, and when only two French doctors and Captain Brown had so far escaped infection, Captain Scott-Williams with four French doctors was brought to the camp. By that time the epidemic was beginning to subside, but there was still much work to be done.

Major Davy and Captain Brown testify to Captain Scott-Williams' splendid work amongst the British whose care he took over. When these two officers left the camp on the 27th June Captain Scott-Williams was not allowed to go, and he had thereafter entire charge of all the English.

Our medical officers speak with enthusiasm of the splendid work of their French colleagues. Dr. Saint-Hilaire was particularly helpful, a splendid organiser, full of ideas, never daunted. "Everyone in the camp," Major Davy says, "will always owe him a debt of gratitude."

Of Captain Brown, Major Davy speaks in the highest terms. His equable, cheery temperament, his shrewd judgment and common sense and doggedness were just what were wanted. In the end he, too, fell with something which was probably atypical typhus.

The value of Major Davy's work cannot be exaggerated. He toiled incessantly, until he himself contracted the disease he had done so much to combat. His work and example were beyond praise.

The Committee have not thought it necessary in this report to deal with the arrangements for the supply to the camp during the period of quarantine of such things as were supplied, nor yet with the discrimination to which the British, as contrasted with the other prisoners and doctors in the camp, were subjected by the German guard. Such matters appear to the Committee to be merely of mechanical or ephemeral interest, and they need not be further dwelt on.

At the commencement of this report the Committee ventured to express the belief that much that occurred at Gardelegen during the outbreak was typical of German prison administration. Their report will, they believe, have disclosed the startling parallel between the occurrences here and those at Wittenberg, upon which the committee have already reported. Many similar features are to be found also in the administration of the camp at Langensalza during a similar epidemic. What could be done and was done by a more enlightened and sympathetic administration in a like crisis is shown by the experiences of the prisoners at Göttingen. That camp, however, was a bright exception. There was no trace of the humane method being in favour at Gardelegen during the terrible days of its visitation.

That visitation, however, was not all loss. It furnished the opportunity for an exhibition of unselfish devotion to duty and of heroic self-sacrifice which it may be hoped will be remembered and cherished long after the callousness and cowardice which evoked it have mercifully passed into oblivion.

On behalf of the Government Committee on the Treatment
by the Enemy of British Prisoners of War,
ROBERT YOUNGER, *Chairman.*

September 13, 1916.

N.B.—It is understood that no British prisoners have been detained at Gardelegen for some time past.

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